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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000303

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL TU IZ
SUBJECT: SANI DISCUSSES KIRKUK WITH BAGHDAD POLITICIANS

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gary Grappo for reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. The Ambassador's Senior Advisor for Northern Iraq (SANI) met with Kurdish leadership at the Council of Representatives (COR) on the topic of the disputed internal boundary (DIBs) areas and Kirkuk. Kurdish Alliance List (KAL) bloc leader Fuad Masoum and Deputy COR Speaker Arif Tayfour provided historical context for the Kurdish perspective and pressed for U.S. assistance in implementing Article 140 to resolve Kirkuk. Masoum suggested, but did not say explicitly, that the way ahead on Kirkuk would entail a negotiated political agreement. SANI reiterated U.S. support for Article 140 and for conducting a census to help facilitate future electoral events. He also stressed that Iraqi politicians must focus on the future, not the past, if progress is to be made in resolving DIBs-related issues. END SUMMARY.

SOME COMPROMISE ON KIRKUK SUGGESTED

¶12. (C) On January 12, Kurdish Alliance List (KAL) Leader Fuad Masoum (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan - PUK) noted to SANI that disputed areas existed not just in northern Iraq, but also in the western and southern regions. Reiterating familiar laments, Masoum asserted that every regime since Iraq achieved independence had made the Kurds suffer greatly. Noting that Iraq was comprised of districts before the current system of provinces was adopted, Masoum said it had been easier for Saddam to manipulate the borders of provinces, disrupting cultural and tribal links. In 1984, the PUK negotiated with Saddam's Ali Hassan al-Majeed to define those areas and their authorities; however, Majeed eventually disregarded the agreement, betrayed the Kurds and perpetrated the Anfal campaign.

¶13. (C) Masoum clearly stated that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) did not intend to separate from Iraq, and that Kurdish leaders were not encouraging that line of thought. He suggested, but did not say explicitly, that the way ahead on Kirkuk would entail a negotiated political agreement. SANI welcomed this approach in consonant with U.S. thinking on Article 140. Masoum noted that if Kirkuk were to become part of the KRG, they would be well-treated. He dismissed claims that the KRG had orchestrated a campaign to bring Kurds from neighboring countries to Kirkuk to tip the demographic balance there, and asked SANI to help bring U.S. assistance to bear in preventing neighboring states from interfering in Iraq's internal affairs.

UNAMI NOT SEEN AS EFFECTIVE

¶14. (C) In a meeting on January 12, Deputy COR Speaker Arif Tayfour reminded SANI that the Kurds suffered genocide at the hands of Saddam and implied that the Kurds were therefore "owed" Kirkuk, which he claimed had "always" been a Kurdish

city. He recounted how his father had allowed a few Arabs to move "temporarily" into the Hawija area in 1930, a move for which he had never forgiven himself. Tayfour said the Kurds wanted a way forward on the disputed territories and pressed SANI for specific details about the U.S. view of Kirkuk's future status. Tayfour accused the Turks of directly meddling in Kirkuk, and of trying to make Kirkuk "another Cyprus." He cautioned that if the U.S. sided with the Turkomans on Kirkuk, the Kurds would be forced to be "difficult." SANI emphasized the importance of focusing on the future and not dwelling in the past if progress on the emotive, complex DIBs dwelling in the past if progress on the emotive, complex DIBs issues was to be achieved. Tayfour suggested that dividing Kirkuk could be the best way forward, and said he was open to having the Turkomans join the Kurds and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). SANI questioned the feasibility of such a course, observing that getting the parties to agree on how to divide Kirkuk would be no easier than achieving agreement on how to resolve outstanding issues within the current borders.

¶15. (C) Tayfour insisted that implementation of Article 140 was the key to solving Arab-Kurd issues, but assessed UNAMI's efforts to date on Kirkuk as ineffectual. He did not think UNAMI should play a prominent role in the future in implementing Article 140. Tayfour discounted the argument of Arabs and Turkomans that Article 140 was no longer valid because the December 2007 expiration date specified in the constitution had passed. He noted that other important issues similarly itemized in the Constitution had not been addressed, and said "... if Article 140 is null and void, then so is the constitution itself." SANI reiterated U.S. support for the constitution and Article 140, and for conducting a census, underscoring the need to focus on the implementation of Article 140 through an inclusive negotiating process involving all the parties.

¶16. (C) COMMENT. Following KRG President Barzani's important discussion of Article 140 during his recent trip to Washington -- including evolution toward acceptance of an inclusive negotiating process rather than a narrow focus on an up/down referendum -- we are working with UNAMI on options to inject new energy into the effort to address DIBs issues.

END COMMENT.

HILL